

JUNE 1, 2005

# DESERT VOICE



**48th BCT**  
**trains for** **iRaq**  
page 6

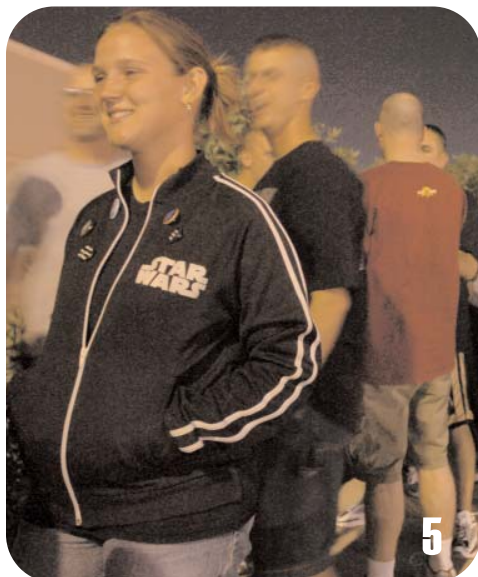
# CONTENTS

# DESERT VOICE

Volume 26, Issue 42

The Desert Voice is an authorized publication for members of the Department of Defense. Contents of the Desert Voice are not necessarily the official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government or Department of the Army. The editorial content of this publication is the responsibility of the Coalition Forces Land Component Command Public Affairs Office. This newspaper is published by Al-Qabandi United, a private firm, which is not affiliated with CFLCC. All copy will be edited. The Desert Voice is produced weekly by the Public Affairs Office.

# 42



5

## Page 3 Range control

The Range Control team in Kuwait covers more than just ranges. From finding Soldiers lost in the desert, to keeping Bedouins out of impact zones, these vets are happy to help.

## Page 4 New Combat Action Badge

The Army has announced the design for the Combat Action Badge. The badge features a bayonet and a grenade and is expected to be in stores by late summer or early fall.

## Page 5 Star Wars III at Arifjan

The long-anticipated prequel, "Revenge of the Sith," opened in Kuwait last week at Camp Arifjan.

## Pages 6&7 48th BCT heads north

The Georgia National Guard's 48th Brigade Combat Team prepares for its mission with final system checks in Kuwait.



4

## Page 8 Fiji troops redeploy

Fijian soldiers returned from a six-month United Nations mission in Baghdad. Spirits run high as the 130-man contingent goes home and one troop recounts Christmas caroling around the International Zone.

## Page 9 STB in for the long haul

Commanding Camp Arifjan's Special Troops Battalion is a two-year assignment. A new commander faces the challenges of providing personnel services for CFLCC troops.

## Page 10 Where is Arifjan's tomato?

A strangely popular tomato plant fights the odds in a harsh desert environment only to have it's first fruit mysteriously disappear.



8

## Page 11 Community Events

Walking club, Spades tournament, Bingo night, Catch Phrase Tournament.

## Back page Troop submissions

Story by Gino Flores and photos from Need For Speed Track Meet at Camp Arifjan

### CFLCC Commanding General

Lt. Gen. R. Steven Whitcomb

### CFLCC Command Sergeant Major

Command Sgt. Maj. Julian Kellman

### CFLCC Public Affairs Officer

Col. Michael Phillips

### Commander 14th PAD

Maj. Thomas E. Johnson

### NCOIC 14th PAD

Staff Sgt. Sheryl Lawry

### Desert Voice Editor

Sp. Brian Trapp

### Desert Voice Assistant Editor

Sgt. Matt Millham

### Desert Voice Staff Writers

Sp. Curt Cashour

Sp. Aimee Felix

### 14th PAD Broadcasters

Sgt. Scott White

Sp. Charles Spears

### 14th PAD Graphic Artist

Sgt. Sergio Exposito



6

### On the Cover

The 48th Brigade Combat Team prepares for its deployment.

Graphic illustration by Sgt. Matt Millham

# More than range safeties

Story and photos by Spc. Almee Felix

Walk into Camp Buehring's range control operations center at any time of the day, and you'll witness a study in schizophrenia. With three different radios, a DSN phone and a cell phone calling for requests all at the same time, it's a wonder range safety tech Ray Winger hasn't lost his cool. He calmly responds to every call while he engages in a conversation about the joys of his job.

No matter how much is on their plate, Area Support Group-Kuwait's range control staff members have a broad area of responsibility, and as retired Soldiers themselves, they are always glad to lend a hand to troops, said Michael Vallare, one of Camp Buehring's range control safety technicians.

The staff of 16 operates out of two centers. The main one is at Camp Buehring, which has 13 of the staff, and a smaller staff calls Camp Arifjan home.

Aside from making sure Udairi Range's 3,000 square kilometers are run properly, ASG-Kuwait range control responds to the emergencies of servicemembers throughout Kuwait.

Whether it's a vehicle rollover or Soldiers lost in the middle of the desert, range control is there to help, said Michael Vallare, range operations safety technician. Range control is responsible for calling in MEDEVACs and reporting vehicle accidents that happen in their area of operation.

The troops who have gotten lost in the desert, ending up in the range's impact zone. "They call us, and we go out there to navigate them back home," said Vallare.

The reliability of this 24/7 operation has spread to the point that officials at the Aerial Port of Debarkation give Soldiers emergency contact cards with range control's number at the top.

The range operations safety technicians work 12-hour shifts, seven days a week. Range workers spend their shifts either in the operations center manning the radios and phones, keeping track of the status of each range, or they spend it in the desert at Udairi Range, ensuring units are following instructions and staying safe. Keeping Bedouins out of harm's way is another one of their tasks.

Because the complex belongs to Kuwait and is administered by the Kuwait Ministry of Defense not the U.S. Army, range control can't put in a berm, fence or sign to stop Bedouins from entering the complex, because it's their land, said Vallare.



**Michael Vallare, one of 13 range security technicians at Camp Buehring's range control operations center, patrolling Udairi Range's Range 10, May 25.**



**Soldiers from Georgia National Guard's 48th Brigade Combat Team get some practice with the 50 cal. after getting cleared to by range control, who were closely monitoring the weather to avoid any issues that could have been caused by one of Udairi Range's sandstorms.**

In order to maintain safety and order on the ranges, any troops operating in or around the complex or anyone flying near Udairi must report to and follow the instructions of range control.

Bedouins not only roam Udairi so their animals can graze on the shrubbery, but many of them are brass pickers. "They turn the brass in for money the way we do with our recyclable cans back home," said Vallare.

Since there will always be anomalies,

Vallare and Winger said they try to minimize risks by coming down hard on units about their medical readiness.

Every unit that goes out on the range has to have a designated medical vehicle.

Vallare, Winger and the rest of the range control staff don't take their responsibility to keep Soldiers safe lightly.

"They might think we're being [jerks] sometimes, but we're the [jerks] that'll make sure they get up north alive and stay that way," said Winger.





**The Combat Action Badge design was approved May 27 by Gen. Peter Schoomaker, Army chief of staff. It's slated to go into immediate production.**

## Army reveals design for new combat badge

Army News Service

The Army announced the design for the Combat Action Badge May 27.

The design was approved by Gen. Peter J. Schoomaker, Army chief of staff.

The CAB, featuring both a bayonet and grenade, may be awarded to any Soldier performing assigned duties in an area where hostile fire pay or imminent danger pay is authorized, who is personally present and actively engaging or being engaged by the enemy, and performing satisfactorily in accordance with the prescribed rules of engagement, according to its authorizing language. The award is not limited by one's branch or military occupational specialty.

"Warfare is still a human endeavor," Schoomaker said. "Our intent is to recognize Soldiers who demonstrate and live the warrior ethos."

"The global war on terrorism and its associated operations will be the first era of conflict considered for this award," said Lt. Col. Bill Johnson, Human Resources Command chief of military awards. "September 18, 2001, is the effective date for the new award. That is when President Bush signed Senate Joint Resolution 23, authorizing the use of military force against those responsible for the recent attacks launched against the United States."

The CAB will go into immediate production and should be available late this summer or early fall through unit supply and military clothing sales stores.

For more information, visit U.S. Army Badges, The Institute of Heraldry Homepage, <http://www.tioh.hqda.pentagon.mil> and click on the link to U.S. Army Badges.

# Distro det. departs desert

Story and photo by Spc. Brian Trapp

After helping two divisions and countless other troops redeploy, a portion of Deployment Support Element 7 redeployed itself last week.

Both the 276th and 491st Automated Cargo Distribution Detachments packed their bags for Fort Story and Fort Eustis, Va., respectively after about nine months of helping other units ship vehicles and containers home. They turned over the reigns to the 1398th Deployment Support Brigade in May. The 358th ACDD, is the last major component of DSE7 left; it's slated to redeploy in July.

DSE7 acted as a bridge between two redeployment support brigades, said Lt. Col. Bill Paape, DSE-7 commander. This is the first time Surface Deployment and Distribution Command used ACDDs, mixed from Reserve and active duty units, for this kind of redeployment support.

"It was an enormous success," Paape said. "The Soldiers were motivated and capable to help the war fighter meet redeployment dates."

The distribution detachments' primary mission was operating a computer system called Transportation Coordination Automation Information for Movements Systems, more commonly known as TC-AIMS. The system is a program that helps automatically create vehicle and cargo load plans for ships.

They also inspected cargo containers for damage, wrote up military shipping labels, made radio frequency tags to help track cargo as it moved through theater and helped units work through the paperwork involved in getting their gear home.

For some this deployment meant months of data entry and working out problems that would come up with TC-AIMS. For others it was an unexpected whirlwind tour of Iraq, jumping from camp to camp to help units prepare their gear so it could ship before the units crossed the berm into Kuwait.

When Staff Sgt. Ebrima Manneh deployed, he didn't anticipate leading a three-man team through Iraq for six months, helping train unit-movement officers and preparing units in Iraq for their redeployment before they arrived in Kuwait.

"For me, being in Iraq, and at every [forward operating base], you deal with dif-

ferent groups," said Manneh, container inspection noncommissioned officer in charge with the 491st. "You see all the excitement and help them go home. It was very rewarding. Now, it's our turn."

Manneh spent his time in Iraq checking units' containers, making sure they were serviceable and that they had their shipping paperwork right "so when they come [to Kuwait] they don't have to go through the hassle of doing it again," he said.

The 276th and 491st took on the mission with only a two-week class and two weeks of training with the unit they replaced. Then they were on their own with TC-AIMS, working to figure out the program while helping units redeploy.

Throughout the deployment, the troops stayed motivated to help move service-members home as rapidly as possible, Paape said.

For Spc. Antoine Christmas, a TC-AIMS operator with the 276th, it was a challenge that he took on with gusto. He spent his whole deployment in Kuwait except for a stint in the Netherlands where he worked with civilian contractors to train others on the system's basic functions.

Even though Christmas spent months helping troops do data entry and navigate the TC-AIMS, he still looked beyond the tediousness of day-to-day data entry.

"Some things you see every day, but different things come up every day too," Christmas said. "I liked solving any problems that would come up and listening to [the other Soldiers'] war stories and what's going on up there."

Operating TC-AIMS and helping sort out the thousands of pieces of information that need to be put into the system is an important part of helping get troops home, Paape said. "The business of redeployment support is about data accuracy."

Paape said the mission was successful, and it could be gauged by the reactions of the units that DSE-7 helped redeploy.

"Arguably, the Soldiers in this unit got the most unit coins out of anyone," Paape said. "Division and brigade commanders coming through here were very happy with [the Soldiers'] work."

Now that he is on his way home, Christmas is looking forward to heading back to Virginia Beach, Va., to see his family, while Manneh is looking forward to going to visit his wife in The Gambia. Paape is headed back to his home in Tomah, Wis.

**"Arguably, the Soldiers in this unit got the most unit coins out of anyone."**

**- Lt. Col. Bill Paape**

# STAR WARS

## Coming to a galaxy, or a camp, near you.

Story and photo by Sgt. Matt Millham

Troops at Camp Arifjan who thought they'd miss out on a big screen viewing of the last film in the Star Wars prequel, "Revenge of the Sith," were relieved last week when they found out the movie was no farther away than the community center.

The film has been showing at Arifjan's Zone 6 theater since May 22 and at the Zone 1 community center theater since May 23. Soon, it will be available to troops across Kuwait, according to Army Air Force Exchange Service management in Kuwait.

It wasn't quite the same as seeing a movie back home. For one, the troops didn't have to pay for it. There were no kids or babies to cry or blurt out statements indicating the severity of the discomfort in their bladders. And, perhaps most notably in Zone 1, community center staff spent their time ferrying in free popcorn to moviegoers on the opening day – a perk that broke the theater's usual no food or beverages rule.

Not everyone was able to hitch a ride on the latest Star Wars bandwagon in the first few days. Limited seating led Morale Welfare and Recreation staff to come up with a first-come, first-served signup roster that had troops scrambling to the Zone 1 community center Monday morning to get their names on the list.

Air Force Tech Sgt. Cassamo Remtula, who works in Coalition Forces Land Component Command's engineering section, said he found out about the showing while he was at Ali al Salem Air Base and asked someone in his office to go sign him up because he didn't want to miss out on seeing the movie. The Star Wars movies, he said, are his son's favorites.

But Remtula wasn't, by far, the biggest fan waiting in a line that stretched more than a hundred feet down the sidewalk outside the Zone 1 community center. Wearing a jacket with the head of a storm trooper on the back and the Star Wars logo on the front, Spc. Sarah Alstott, a member of the 844th Engineer Battalion's Headquarters Support Company, stuck out in the crowd gathered before the 8 p.m. showing in Zone 1. Anyone who

**"It's just the greatest story ever told."**

**- Spc. Sarah Alstott**



**Spc. Sarah Alstott, a member of the 844th Engineer Battalion's Headquarters and Support Company, stands in line for the latest Star Wars movie, *Revenge of the Sith*, which opened at Camp Arifjan's Zone 1 Theater May 23. Despite temperatures near 100 degrees Fahrenheit, Alstott waited outside for nearly 45 minutes while wearing her Star Wars jacket.**

toughs out the wait for a movie in 100-or-so degree heat while wearing a jacket has to be some sort of hardcore fan.

Alstott, who first encountered Star Wars somewhere around the age of 6, admitted to a lifelong infatuation with the intergalactic saga. In addition to the jacket, she also owns about 10 different Star Wars pins and at least two other shirts along with posters and Yoda figurines.

The arrival of the movie in Kuwait was, to say the least, a relief for Alstott, who said she "was devastated" when she found out the movie was going to come out while she was deployed in support of the war on terror.

She found out the movie would come to Arifjan just the day before when she saw a poster. "I about died when I saw it, I got so excited," she said.

Having not yet seen the movie, Alstott was optimistic about what she would see. "It's just the greatest story ever told. There's no way not to like it," she stated emphatically.

After seeing the movie, Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class John Gibb said the film answered a lot of questions that needed to be answered to bridge the gap from the second movie to the fourth, which is known to hardcore fans as "A New Hope" and to casual fans simply as Star Wars.

While he wasn't all that impressed with the acting, Gibb said, "Acting's not really the strong point – it's a method to tell the story." He did like the action – especially the fight scenes, he said.

Though the movie hasn't yet reached all of Kuwait's camps, at least 50 copies are now floating around Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom, according to Stars and Stripes.





Photo by Curtis Compton, Atlanta Journal-Constitution

**Spc. Brandon Watkins, left, gives Spc. Michael J. Griffin an IV inside a Bradley Fighting Vehicle as part of his combat life saver training near Camp Buehring May 20. The Soldiers are with A Company, 1st Battalion, 121st Infantry Regiment.**

# 48th BCT: rugged, ready

## Georgia Guardsmen move forward, assume mission

Story by Spc. Curt Cashour

The first time the 48th Brigade Combat Team got orders to deploy to the Middle East was in 1991, during Operation Desert Storm. The unit trained for months in preparation for their part in the operation, but the conflict ended before the 48th had the chance to deploy.

Once again, the National Guard unit from Macon, Ga., is set to deploy to the region, but this time they're guaranteed a piece of the action. In fact, most of the nearly 4,000 48th Soldiers departed Camp Buehring May 20 and 21. In Iraq, the brigade will be,

located on the southwest side of Baghdad.

Thanks to a six-month train up at Fort Stewart and the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, Calif., the Soldiers arrived at Buehring with the bulk of their training requirements already complete. While in Kuwait, the troops spent most of their time attending classroom briefings, trying to stay out of the heat and reflecting on the yearlong deployment ahead of them.

Aside from a day at Udairi Range to reconfirm his weapon's zero, Sgt. Kenneth Lanier, a 35-year-old forward observer with the brigade's fire support section, passed the bulk of his time in

Kuwait attending briefings on everything from improvised explosive devices to survival, evasion, resistance and escape techniques. After the slow pace of his time at Buehring, Lanier said he's ready for his mission up north.

"All we're doing here is refreshing. We had the luxury of a six-month train up, so we're ahead of the ballgame," Lanier said.

Like most 48th Soldiers, Lanier found out about the unit's Iraq mis-

sion in November 2004. The deployment orders came as no surprise to the 17-year Guard veteran.

"I knew I was going from the day I seen

**"All we're doing here is refreshing. We had the luxury of a six-month train up, so we're ahead of the ballgame."**

**- Sgt. Kenneth Lanier**



the planes hit the towers," he said.

When he gets to Iraq, one of Lanier's main jobs will be crater analysis: visiting impact sites of insurgent mortar attacks to determine the location from which the attacks were launched, he said.

Although he's proud of his impending role in helping secure the freedom and stability of Iraq, Lanier said he still has his worries.

"I'm a realist. We're going into a combat zone. No matter how much the general says we're taking everybody home, we're not taking everybody home. But I hope I'm wrong," he said.

Spc. Robert Cash is a member of the Headquarters and Headquarters Company Military Police Platoon. As of May 25, Cash still wasn't sure about the mission he'd be performing in Iraq. Still, the 27-year-old is ready to do his part for OIF.

"A lot of my friends have already been here and done their part. I signed up for the military over eight years ago. [Supporting OIF] is part of my patriotic duty," said Cash, who works as a sheriff's deputy when he's not deployed.

Like many National Guard and Reserve units, the 48th is filled with Soldiers wise beyond their rank. Sgt. 1st Class Larry H. Collins, a plans and operations noncommissioned officer for the 48th HHC, has nearly 30 years of experience in the active Army and National Guard, including stints in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Iraq during Desert Storm.

Collins usually drills with the Georgia National Guard State Headquarters in Ellenwood, Ga., but volunteered for this deployment. So what keeps the 50-year-old going after all these years?

"Retirement points, and I just enjoy what

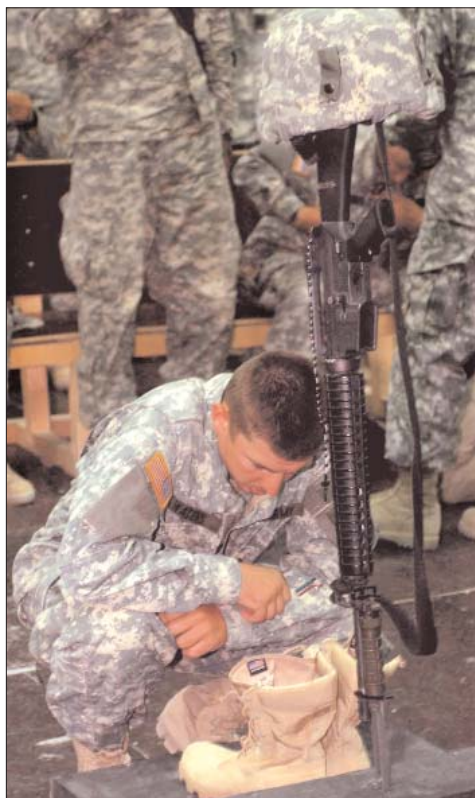


Photo by Sgt. David Bill, 48th BCT PAO

**A Soldier from the 48th Brigade Combat Team's 118th Field Artillery pays final respects to Sgt. Charles C. Gillican III during a memorial service at Camp Buehring. Gillican died May 14 at Camp Arifjan from injuries sustained in a vehicle accident at the Seaport of Debarkation.**

I'm doing," said Collins, who also likes the camaraderie deployments foster.

Throughout the unit's mobilization, Collins said he has tried to impart lessons learned from his lengthy career on some of

the unit's younger Soldiers, telling them, "Being in the National Guard is over. You're in the active Army in a war zone."

Fitting in with the unit wasn't a problem for Collins, who deployed to Bosnia with the 48th in 2000.

"A lot of people, I still know from the last time," he said.

When the 48th wraps up this deployment, they will have been mobilized for nearly 18 months. But most of the unit's Soldiers don't seem to mind the interruption to their family lives and careers.

Chaplain's assistant Master Sgt. John Linstra cross leveled into the 48th from the Missouri National Guard State Headquarters in Jefferson City, Mo.

Although he joked that he's had a hard time learning to "speak Southern" since he joined the unit in February, Linstra said most of the 48th Soldiers have been handling the deployment extremely well so far. The only issues up to this point have been a couple of Red Cross messages and changes in plans to a few Soldiers family care plans.

Another volunteer, Spc. Stephen Kussmaul, normally serves with the 178th MP Battalion in Monroe, Ga. The 25-year-old works as a sales manager for a telephone company as a civilian, but put his career on hold to serve with the 48th HHC MP Platoon in Iraq.

"I went to my first sergeant and told him I want to be the next guy sent to Iraq," said Kussmaul, adding that part of the reason he enlisted in the Guard was for the chance to deploy to a combat zone.

"We're going into war. I didn't volunteer to come over here to talk and negotiate," he said.



**Soldiers of the 48th Brigade Combat Team verify their weapons' zeros at Udairi Range May 24 in preparation for their movement to Iraq. Nearly 4,000 48th Soldiers moved into Iraq Friday and Saturday. The 48th was mobilized for Operation Desert Storm, but that conflict ended before the group could deploy. This time around, the troops will assume operations at Camp Stryker, located on the southwest side of Baghdad.**

Photo by Sgt. David Bill, 48th BCT PAO

# Fijians head for home

Story and photo by Spc. Almee Felk

After six months serving for the U.N. in Baghdad, it turns out that, just as the Fijians predicted, the two things that kept them going while in Iraq were their chaplain and their yaqona.

"We had some [yaqona] every night, only between the hours after dinner and before midnight, of course," said contingent sergeant major Warrant Officer Sisa Saukawa. Yaqona is a traditional Fijian drink.

The first Fijian contingent deployed under the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq returned to Kuwait May 25 on their way back to the islands, after providing security at the U.N. compound in Baghdad.

The Fijians did not return jaded; their stay at the compound was pleasant, considering they were away from their families, said Saukawa. "It was like a three-star hotel," said Saukawa of the U.N. living accommodations the higher-ranking members of the contingent had. The lower enlisted troops lived in large six-man rooms with a balcony, said Saukawa.

While life wasn't so bad for the 130-man contingent, they never allowed that relaxation to get the best of them while they provided security for the compound. "There was a lot going on around us, and at times it did get scary, especially during the elec-



**Redeploying Fijian troops unload a pallet of their gear onto a truck May 25 at the Aerial Port of Debarkation. They arrived after a six-month, U.N. deployment to Iraq where they provided security for the U.N. compound in Baghdad.**

tions." The compound received daily bomb threats through the month of January, said Saukawa.

Saukawa, who like most Fijians is a devout Christian, said the prayers of contingent members and their families are what kept the threats from escalating. "As a religious people we believe that it was thanks to the Lord's protection that we had no attacks," said Saukawa.

While Saukawa attributes the safety of the group to God, like any good Fijian he attributes the high spirits of the group to yaqona.

"We brought enough root for the entire time there," said Saukawa. The drink is a natural relaxant made from the pulverized root of a tree belonging to the pepper family.

His number one lesson learned in Iraq: "You have to bring yourself to the level of the young soldiers, and choose your words well; don't make them unhappy. At a time like this you should only have words of encouragement." This was something Saukawa passed along to his replacement whom he met last week in Iraq. He added that the second contingent seemed very prepared.

"I'm looking forward to support the Iraqi people build up," said Capt. Benny Ramati, the administrative officer for the second Fijian contingent. "Sadaam's regime was just a stumbling block; we hope to show [Iraqis] how friendly the world should be,"

he added.

Staying true to their islander traditions of friendliness and hospitality, the outgoing Fijian contingent held a traditional dinner with dancing and lots of food and yaqona for U.N. and other ranking officials in Baghdad's international zone. The dinner followed a ceremony where U.N. officials awarded a service medal to everyone in the first Fijian contingent. "We also made an underground oven like we do back home and cooked chicken, potatoes, fish and a lot more," said Saukawa.

This wasn't the first time the Fijians entertained coalition members in the international zone. They made their mark almost the instant they arrived, right in time for Christmas. A U.S. chaplain heard about their singing, something the Fijians became known for early on because of how well they sang in their daily church services. The chaplain asked members of the contingent to go caroling around the international zone, said Saukawa.

"We sang in the compound, in the hotels, and everywhere we went Soldiers broke down in front of us," said Saukawa, who added that the singers tried to stay strong for the troops, but it was difficult because they too missed their families.

Now on their way home, though, Saukawa and his troops have nothing to be sad about. "I'm looking forward to a month off to enjoy the islands with my family," said Saukawa.

## Fiji Facts

The most common greeting among indigenous Fijians is "bula," which means health.

Fijians live by a custom called kerekere, which dictates that a relative or neighbor may ask for something he or she needs, and it must be given without expectation of repayment.

Among native Fijians, tilting your head while speaking to someone shows respect.

Villages in Fiji are composed of families that form clans or mataqali (land-holding units).

Fijians are big rugby, soccer and cricket fans. Fiji's national rugby team is among the best in the world.

The University of the South Pacific is a collaborative higher-education venture by several small Pacific Island nations. It receives substantial funding from Fiji.

The most common greeting among indigenous Fijians is "bula," which means health.



# Two years at STB, done

Story and photo by Spc. Curt Cashour

In a cramped conference room at Camp Arifjan, dozens of Soldiers waited for the ceremony to begin.

In an instant, the waiting was over. The commander, Lt. Col. Richard Koucheravy, strode into the room, breezing past the crowd with a look of confidence and pride painted on his face. He had commanded the troops for two long years. It was almost time for him to move on.

Though Koucheravy will no longer command the Third Army Special Troops Battalion after June 3, the mission of STB remains: to provide unit-level support to Third Army Headquarters and Army Forces Central Command Headquarters and administer command and control to company and detachment-sized units attached to Third Army Headquarters. Simply stated, Third Army Headquarters keeps Operation Iraqi Freedom support efforts in Kuwait running smoothly, and STB keeps Third Army Headquarters and its supporting units running smoothly.

The brainchild of then Lt. Gen Tommy Franks, who at the time was Third Army's commanding general, STB was created in 1998.

"Having a battalion commander kind of provides a bridge – a little more senior guy that can get out there and help enforce standards across the board," he said.

Though STB deployed to Kuwait along with Third Army Headquarters in November 2001 in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, its permanent presence in the Middle East didn't start until October 2002, when CENTCOM directed Third Army to deploy to Kuwait for contingency and planning operations for Operation Iraqi Freedom. The unit has been partially deployed ever since, Koucheravy said.

STB, which has about 125 Soldiers, provides personnel services for around 650 Coalition Forces Land Component Command servicemembers. The unit also provides support to units attached to or under CFLCC command and control. All in all, STB supports thousands of troops located in Kuwait and Atlanta. This support comes in several different forms and includes processing rest and recuperation leave forms, emergency leave forms, awards and promotions, said Sgt. 1st Class Allison Oboro, STB personnel noncommissioned officer in charge.

Oboro is particularly proud of STB's R&R leave processing operation, which helps 98 percent of troops taking R&R trips get the

exact trip dates requested.

On an average day, STB processes about 10 troops departing for R&R from Kuwait. That's in addition to the near constant flow of Third Army Soldiers traveling between Kuwait and Atlanta, where Third Army is based, said Maj. Douglas Carbone, STB interim executive officer.

The biggest challenge and most important aspect of dealing with all of these units and servicemembers is maintaining accountability of troops, Oboro said. Making matters even more difficult is the sheer number of troops heading to and from R&R each day.

"Strength accountability is number one. If we don't know where a Soldier is, we can't function," she said.

The best way to ensure accountability is

to rely on unit first sergeants, Oboro said.

STB's focus on personnel issues means that, much of the time, the unit provides detailed assistance for specific Soldier concerns.

"That's the part of the job I like the most," Oboro said.



Former Third Army STB Executive Officer Maj. Patrick Laverenz, right, presents outgoing STB Commander Lt. Col. Richard Koucheravy with a Kuwaiti sailboat model at Camp Arifjan. The gift recognized Koucheravy's two-year command of STB.

## Treating a canine's broken canine



Navy Cdr. Charles McQuigg, a member of Expeditionary Medical Facility – Dallas, performs a root canal on Bimbo, a military working dog, at the Camp Arifjan Troop Medical Clinic May 21. Bimbo broke one of his canine teeth during training. It's not uncommon for working dogs to wear down or break teeth, said Capt. Jennifer Huntington, a veterinarian with Area Support Group-Kuwait veterinary services.

Photo by Sgt. Matt Millham

# Where is the Arifjan Tomato?

**After beating the odds against survival, the first fruit of a lone plant vanished**

**Story and photo by Sgt. Matt Millham**

If there were a bumper sticker that summed up life for American troops in Kuwait, it would probably read something like: *Zombie on Board*.

This is a place where unconventional hobbies such as watching the desiccation of flat gloss latex enamel could pass for Friday night excitement.

That's probably why there's so much hubbub around the Camp Arifjan Tomato. If this sounds weird, that's because it is.

A lot of people have stories about where the plant came from and who planted it, but the real answer of the tomato's genesis is both mundane and miraculous. It's also where the weirdness begins.

It turns out the tomato plant is quite literally an accident. That is if you believe the version told by Combat Support Associates guard Walter "Jimmy" Carter (who is no relation to the former president as far as he knows), the only person claiming actual ownership of the plant.

Carter is the night shift guard with the pipe. Anyone who goes into or out of the Coalition Forces Land Component Command headquarters at night knows him. He's laid back, gray haired and, well, he's always got a pipe. He's also a huge fan of tomatoes.

Some time about two months ago, Carter got a bowl of tomatoes from the dining facility. To his dismay, he knocked the bowl over, and the tomatoes spilled on the ground. He said he didn't think anything of it until about a month later when he noticed a tiny tomato plant growing in the spot he spilled the bowl, a patch of dry, sandy gravel next to the south gate of the CFLCC headquarters.

"I was born out in the country, and it just reminded me of home," said Carter, who grows a vegetable garden every year back home in Georgia. He created a little circle of rocks around the little plant, tied it up so it wouldn't fall over and started watering it daily. "It's sort of like a pet," he said.

Calling it a pet is an understatement. It's more like a mascot. As if it weren't weird enough that something as temperamental as a tomato plant grew without prompting in



**The Arifjan tomato plant works on producing a replacement for the missing tomato.**

one of the most inhospitable environments imaginable, the tedium of Kuwait almost guaranteed that things would get weirder.

Even though the tomato plant is Carter's, a lot of people started claiming some sort of stake in the plant's fate. Hundreds of people go through the tomato gate every day, and a lot of them noticed the modest little plant. It became a topic of conversation. To varying degrees, people became obsessed with it.

Capt. Robin Baker, who works in CFLCC's personnel office, is one of those people. A lot of people in her office devoted a lot of time to talking about the plant, which they'd see five or six times a day as they went in and out of the gate.

The obsession peaked when the little plant started to produce its first tomato. "I remember seeing it when it was tiny," said Baker. "We'd all been watching this tomato grow ... It had a following, that's for sure."

It took more than a month for the tomato to grow. It never got to what you would call red, but it had turned orange and was roughly the size of a racquetball. Then, all of a sudden, it disappeared.

The following that had grown around the plant bordered on what you might call a cult, and the orange tomato was that cult's golden cow. When their idol disappeared, the cult's response was immediate and angry.

While probably not meeting the threshold that could lead to a death penalty conviction, one half-joking sign posted at the gate proclaimed, "Wanted Dead or Alive: Persons behind the kidnapping or untimely demise of the Camp Arifjan Official Tomato."

It was Baker and her fellow tomato followers in the personnel section who came up with the sign, and they even offered a reward for "information regarding this heinous crime against Vegetalia."

Whether or not the tomato was the

camp's official tomato isn't really the reason people want to know what happened to it. As an object of mutual interest for those people assigned to CFLCC headquarters, the tomato had become the subject of office chit-chat, and in its disappearance, it's become like a minor Elvis as possible scenarios surrounding its fate are hashed out around the coffee pot.

"Everything else around us is sand ... but you had this one little thing that stands out and catches your attention," said Baker. Baker had gone so far as to tell her friends and family at home about the tomato. She had talked about it so much, in fact, that one of her friends sent her a song called "Hang On Little Tomato."

Baker and her coworkers had even worked on a plan for a ceremony to pick the tomato, working out all the details down to who was going to take the picture. It's safe to say that for at least some people, it was a lot more than a tomato – it was an object onto which boredom could be focused. It's theft was a major disappointment.

And what of the thief? Similar to the plant's origins, there are a lot of stories about the tomato's kidnapping. In one version, the antagonist is an Army captain who, unaware of the fruit's significance, picked the tomato and brought it back to his desk where it sat briefly as a souvenir. It's rumored that after the "Wanted Dead or Alive" poster went up, the captain's colonel collared him and forced the fruit's return, but this story is entirely uncorroborated. The ultimate fate of the tomato is unclear, though the rumor continues that one of the guards threw it in the trash after the fruit was returned slightly damaged.

"That tomato did not get a proper burial," said CSA guard Edward Marquez, who works the day shift. He and the other day shift guards didn't even know the tomato was Carter's. They thought it was either wild or planted by some officer, and they'd been watering it as well.

Carter, who grew up farming, isn't nearly as sentimental as everyone else seems to be about the kidnapping. Sure, he raised it, but he said he wouldn't have known what to do with the single orange tomato. He was more concerned that it was picked before it was ripe.

Still, for the plant's fans, all is not lost. Two new tomatoes have sprouted, renewing interest in the plant and, hopefully, calming the furor over the theft.

If you have any information about the disappearance of the tomato, please e-mail Sgt. Matt Millham at [matthew.millham@arifjan.arcent.army.mil](mailto:matthew.millham@arifjan.arcent.army.mil) or call DSN 430-6334.



# Community

## happenings for June 1 through June 7

### Arifjan

**New Zone 1 PX hours, including all food concessions except Green Beans Cafe, are 9 a.m. to 11 p.m. daily.**

#### Wednesday

Bingo Night, 7 p.m., Zone 1 Community Center  
Country Night, 7 p.m., Zone 6 stage  
Legs, butts and guts, 5:30 a.m., Stretch and flex 8 a.m., Step Aerobics, 1 p.m., Circuit weight training, 3 p.m., Zone 1 gym  
Lap swimming, 5 to 7 a.m., pool

#### Thursday

Country Western Night, 7 p.m., Zone 1 Community Center  
Cardio kickboxing, 5:30 a.m., Stretch and Flex, 8 a.m. Circuit Weight Training 3 p.m., Zone 2 gym  
Lap swimming, 5 to 7 a.m., pool

#### Friday

Arifjan Boxing Team, 7:30 p.m., Zone 6 gym  
Salsa Night, 7 p.m., Zone 1 Community Center  
Lap swimming, 5 to 7 a.m., pool  
Interval training, 5:30 a.m., 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. Zone 1 gym

#### Saturday

90s Music Night, 7 p.m., Zone 1 Community Center  
Audie Murphy Club study sessions, 3 p.m., Building 508 Room 25B  
Country Western Night, 7:30 p.m., Zone 6 MWR stage  
Circuit weight training, 5:30 a.m., 8 a.m., 1 p.m. and 3 p.m., Zone 1 gym  
Lap swimming, 5 to 7 a.m., pool

#### Sunday

Salsa Night, 7 p.m., Zone 6 stage  
Lap swimming, 5 to 7 a.m., pool  
Cardio kickboxing, 5:30 a.m., Stretch and Flex, 8 a.m., Circuit Weight Training, 1 p.m., Step Aerobics, 3 p.m., Zone 1 gym

#### Monday

Arifjan Boxing Team, 7:30 p.m., Zone 6 gym  
Lap swimming, 5 to 7 a.m., pool  
Legs, butts and guts, 5:30 a.m., Stretch and flex 8 a.m., Step Aerobics, 1 p.m., Circuit weight training, 3 p.m., Zone 1 gym

#### Tuesday

Lap swimming, 5 to 7 a.m., pool  
Cardio kickboxing, 5:30 a.m., Stretch and Flex, 8 a.m., Circuit Weight Training, 1 p.m., Step Aerobics, 3 p.m., Zone 1 gym

#### Wednesday

Country Western Night, 7 p.m., Zone 6 stage  
Legs, butts and guts, 5:30 a.m., Stretch and flex 8 a.m., Step Aerobics, 1 p.m., Circuit weight training, 3 p.m., Zone 1 gym  
Lap swimming, 5 to 7 a.m., pool

For more information call 430-1202

### Buehring

#### Wednesday

Walking Club (5 miles), 5:30 a.m., command cell flagpole  
Massage Therapy, 9:30 a.m., MWR Tent 4  
Aerobics, 6:30 - 7:30 p.m., MWR Tent 4

#### Thursday

Country Night, 9 p.m., MWR bunker  
Soccer league game, 4 p.m., (Call for info)  
Volleyball league game, 4 p.m., (Call for info)

Walking Club (5 miles), 5:30 a.m., command cell flagpole

Tae-Kwon-Do Class, 7 p.m., MWR Tent 1

#### Friday

Walking Club (5 miles), 5:30 a.m., command cell flagpole

#### Saturday

Tae-Kwon-Do Class, 7 p.m., MWR Tent 1

#### Sunday

Ping Pong Tournament, 6 p.m., Bunker  
Walking Club (10 miles), 5:30 a.m., command cell flagpole

#### Monday

Massage Therapy, 9:30 a.m., MWR Tent  
Softball league game, 4 p.m., (Call for info)  
Walking Club (5 miles), 5:30 a.m., command cell flagpole  
Aerobics, 6:30 - 7:30 p.m., MWR Tent 4

#### Tuesday

Soccer league game, 4 p.m., (Call for info)  
Volleyball league game, 4 p.m., (Call for info)  
Walking Club (5 miles), 5:30 a.m., command cell flagpole  
Tae-Kwon-Do Class, 7 p.m., MWR Tent 1

#### Wednesday

Softball league game, 4 p.m., (Call for info)  
Walking Club (5 miles), 5:30 a.m., command cell flagpole  
Aerobics, 6:30 - 7:30 p.m., MWR Tent 4

For more information call 828-1340

### Kuwaiti Naval Base

#### Monday

Summer Fest (Call for info)

For more information call 839-1063

### Navistar

#### Wednesday

Horseshoe Tournament Practice, 8 a.m. - 10 p.m.  
Self Defense class, 9 a.m. and 7 p.m., basketball court  
Aerobics Class, 6 p.m., Game tent

#### Thursday

Horseshoe Tournament Practice, 8 a.m. - 10 p.m.  
Karate Class, 9 a.m. and 7 p.m., basketball court

#### Friday

MWR representative meeting, 1 p.m., MWR office

Horseshoe Tournament Practice, 8 a.m. - 10 p.m.  
Aerobics Class, 6 p.m., MWR game tent

#### Saturday

Horseshoe tournament, 5 - 8 p.m., horseshoe pits

#### Sunday

Horseshoe tournament, 5 - 8 p.m., horseshoe pits

#### Monday

Chess and Backgammon Tournament practice, 8 a.m. - 10 p.m., MWR game tent  
Aerobics Class, 6 p.m., MWR game tent  
Self Defense class, 9 a.m. and 7 p.m., basketball court

#### Tuesday

Chess and Backgammon Tournament practice, 8 a.m. - 10 p.m., MWR game tent  
Karate Class, 9 a.m. and 7 p.m., basketball court  
Smoking cessation classes, 10 a.m., Rec. tent  
Education/Awareness/Prevention, 1 p.m., Rec. tent  
Karate Class, 9 a.m. and 7 p.m., basketball court

#### Wednesday

Chess and Backgammon Tournament practice, 8 a.m. - 10 p.m., MWR game tent  
Self Defense class, 9 a.m. and 7 p.m., basketball court

Aerobics Class, 6 p.m., MWR game tent

For more information call 844-1137

### Spearhead/SPOD

For more information call 825-1302

### Victory

#### Saturday

Kempo, 4 p.m. (Call for info)  
Movie Night, 8 p.m. (Call for info)

#### Monday

Dominoes Tournament, 8 p.m. (Call for info)

#### Tuesday

Spa Day (Call for info)

For more information call 823-1033

### Virginia

#### Wednesday

Country Western Night, 7 p.m., Dusty Room  
Ping Pong Tournament, 6 p.m., MWR tent

#### Thursday

Bazaar, 10 a.m. - 8 p.m., Dusty Room  
Karaoke Night, 7 p.m., Dusty Room

#### Friday

Salsa Night, 7 p.m., Dusty Room  
Bench and Pull-up Competition, 4 p.m., gym

#### Saturday

Hip Hop/R&B Night, 7 p.m., Dusty Room  
Billiards Tournament, 6 p.m., Dusty Room

#### Sunday

Old School Jams, 7 p.m., Dusty Room  
4-on-4 Volleyball, 4 p.m., courts

#### Monday

Move Night, 7 p.m., Dusty Room  
Spa Day, 10 a.m. - 8 p.m., MWR tent

#### Tuesday

Bingo Night, 7 p.m., Dusty Room

#### Wednesday

Country Western Night, 7 p.m., Dusty Room  
Bench and Pull-up Competition, 4 p.m., gym

For more information call 832-1045

### Doha/Arifjan Shuttle Schedule

Departs Doha Stop 1*	Arrives Doha Stop 2*	Departs Doha Stop 2*	Arrives Arifjan	Departs Arifjan	Arrives Doha
				0545	
	0700	0715	0830	0845	1000
1015	1025	1040	1200	1300	1430
1445	1450	1505	1615	1630	1745
1900	1910	1925	2045		

\* Stop 1 is behind the Building 6 PAX Tent

**Are you holding an event you'd like to see listed in the Desert Voice?**

Send your event listings to the Desert Voice editor at the e-mail address listed on the back page of this issue.

# Navy organization day

By Petty Officer 2nd Class Gino A. Flores,  
NAVELSF FWD Oscar public affairs

Sailors from across Kuwait and even Iraq came to celebrate Navy organization day May 21 at Camp Arifjan.

Sailors from Navy Expeditionary Logistic Support Force Forward Oscar Customs Inspection Battalion and Expeditionary Medical Facility – Dallas came together for a day of games and grilled food for all who made the trip from four different camps to join the festivities.

Following months of sifting through a sea of duffel bags, confiscating contraband and checking military vehicles getting shipped back home; the First Class Petty Officer Association of Forward Oscar organized the Navy celebration, to lift the morale and spirits of Sailors of the battalion. Sailors from Camps Doha, Patriot, and even

Balad, Iraq, joined in the party.

The morning kicked off with Sailors participating in Arifjan's Asian Pacific Heritage Month 5K run.

The first Sailor across the line was Chief Petty Officer John Ward, an information technician with Forward Oscar. Ward crossed the finish line in 10th place at 21: 47.

"This wasn't my best time, but I sure left my shipmates in the dust," said Ward with a smirk as he saw an exhausted Lt. Cmdr. Arthur Requina, administrative officer of Forward Oscar, crossing the finish line.

Later that afternoon, Sailors from Forward Oscar and EMF- Dallas played one another in a softball game that ended with a 7-4 victory for Forward Oscar.

The sun slowly dipped into the horizon and the Sailors pumped up the music. They moved the party into the newly-constructed gazebo. They lit the grill and started serving

food and near beer.

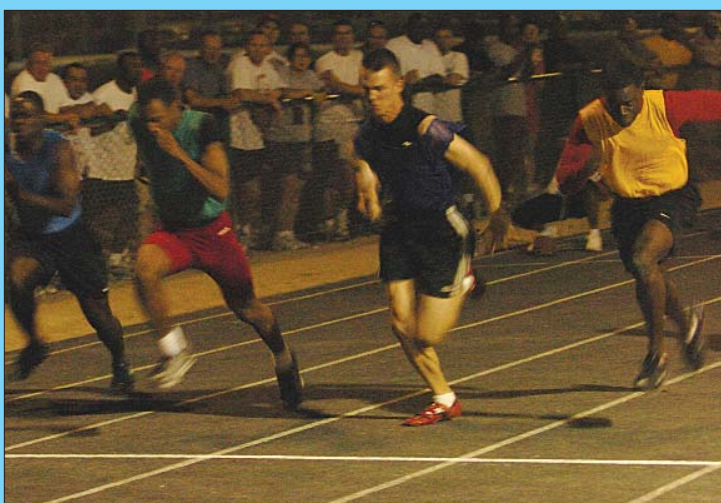
"This brings home cooking to the desert; it's a morale builder," said Petty Officer 1st Class Kenneth Saulsbury, a damage controlman with Forward Oscar, who volunteered to grill food for the afternoon.

The highlight of the day came with an opportunity for revenge. A group of Sailors from Forward Oscar ambushed the Oscar battalion's command team with water balloons, squirt guns and a barrage of whipped-cream chocolate pies.

"It was good to know that the chain of command is just like one of boys," said Petty Officer 2nd Class Michael Bowie, a gunners-mate with Forward Oscar, as he slung another pie at Lt. Cmdr Daniel O'Dea, executive officer of Oscar battalion.

"This is good food, fun and good company," said Lt. Col. Gerardo B. Guerrero, commanding officer of NAVELSF Fwd Oscar battalion.

## Camp Arifjan hosts Need For Speed Track Meet



Photos by Spc. Brian Trapp

Camp Arifjan hosted the Need For Speed Track Meet May 29 at the Zone 1 track. The races were split into two parts. Contenders in the meet qualified for the races in the morning, braving 104 degree weather and came back at night for the finals.

Left: Elizabeth Sauer takes the women's first place in the women's' 400 meter with 75.15 seconds. Right: Participants with the men's 100 meter dash fly out of the starting blocks for a match that would end in a photo finish with Qasim Challenger, right, taking first in one of the fiercest competitions of the night.

Send your  
submissions to:

# DESERT VOICE

Editor  
CFLCC PAO/Desert Voice  
Camp Arifjan  
APO AE 09306  
[matthew.millham@arifjan.arcent.army.mil](mailto:matthew.millham@arifjan.arcent.army.mil)

Find us online at  
[www.dvidshub.net](http://www.dvidshub.net)

## Peachtree Road Race

Start preparing for the largest  
10K road race in the world.

5 a.m. July 4  
at Camp Arifjan



Look for the registration  
form in the Desert Voice soon

## We want your Army B-day photos

Please send pictures of  
how you are celebrating  
the 230th Army Birthday. If  
they make the grade, your  
photos could be in the  
June 22 issue of the  
Desert Voice.

Email to

[matthew.millham@arifjan.arcent.army.mil](mailto:matthew.millham@arifjan.arcent.army.mil)

Subject line: Army Birthday photo